

The Basis of Language Change

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Abstract

Languages coming into contact within the history of Taiwan is the main focus of this paper. Within the historical setting, language change occurred due to political conflict, discrimination, family communication, low birthrate and language identity. No players in this history were more important than the Japanese and Chinese, mainly the KMT government. The early history laid down the multicultural foundation of the island. Through the Japanese, education became wide spread in the country with a new language imposed on people. A greater unification probably resulted from their colonization. Then with the rule of the KMT government from China, a new language was imposed on the people again, but this time with a more detrimental affect on the native tongues. As a result, Mandarin became the identity imposed upon the people. With greater freedom now, the Taiwanese people are beginning to examine their identities and trying to decide on the direction for the many mother tongues being restored.

Introduction

Language change is a phenomenon that is inevitable when people speaking different languages come to live in the same territory irrespective of the course, time period, and means by which they meet, for instance, immigration, business encounter for trade, or military conquest. The underlying principle of this statement is that it is differing peoples coming together for temporary or permanent behavioral interactions that cause language change because language itself as an abstraction does not change. Such being the case, I wish to stress in this article that it is these contacts of people at varying points in time that are the fundamental driving force for language change, thereby providing the foundation to set in motion the causes of language change; namely, (1) heterogeneous ways of life, (2) environmental changes through innovation or other technological advancement, (3) intermarriage, (4) political suppression, (5) colonization, and (6) socio-economical disparity.

While language change can be examined in several countries from these points of view, there is no better country to examine than Taiwan for observing current or on-going changes. For this reason, I came to Taiwan in 2011 to conduct fieldwork for a first-hand

experience of one year, because Taiwan has, on the one hand, a multicultural background and, on the other, undergone major political upheavals over the past century or so which have affected some, if not all, of the causes of language change, involving the following languages: (1) Ho-Lo, (2) Hakka, (3) Mandarin Chinese, (4) Japanese, and (5) the aboriginal languages of Taiwan (from the Austro-Asiatic family)

During my fieldwork in Taiwan (2011-2012), for the phenomenon of language changes, I focused on the history of Taiwan, learned Ho-Lo, listened to people in daily activities, watched television programs in Ho-Lo and Mandarin Chinese, and interacted with others. Therefore, I shall focus on the following topics: (1) a review of the early history of Taiwan and of the past 100 years, (2) the current situation of changes in Taiwan regarding several subjects: (a) political conflicts, (b) discrimination, (c) family communication, (d) low birthrate, and (e) language identity. As my fieldwork was not complete at the time of this writing, this paper is an interim report to be followed by a more in-depth paper after collecting more data by observing further changes.

Brief Review of the History of Taiwan

The history of Taiwan is very multicultural with a lack of stability until the takeover by the Japanese (1895-1945). Even during those fifty years, turmoil and resistance from within Taiwan also erupted, because of the multi-ethnic complexities, owing to the fact that aboriginal tribes inhabited the island as the earliest settlers coupled with the later immigrants from mainland China prior to the Japanese occupation. The complexities were compounded because the aboriginal languages are Austro-Asiatic languages and the Dutch also set foot on the island (1623-1662) coinciding with the Spanish participation in trade on Taiwan (1626-1642).

As a result, intermarriages became inevitable between some Dutch and aborigines, it was more prevalent between the Chinese immigrants and the aborigines, with sporadic intermarriages also between the Japanese and the Chinese immigrants later. But a major complexity took place prior to the Japanese occupation. Towards the end of the Ming Dynasty, a general known as Cheng Cheng-Kung (also known as Koxinga) led a large group of his soldiers as Ming loyalists to flee Mainland China and established a regime of the Ming Dynasty in exile which lasted for twenty years (1661-1681). Koxinga's son inherited the regime due to the father's death, but he was too weak to resist the military and political pressure from Mainland China as the Ching dynasty after taking over the Ming Dynasty had gained strength militarily, politically and economically. The heir of the Ming regime in exile surrendered to the Ching Dynasty in Mainland China, thereby becoming a colonial administration of the Ching Dynasty.

Through the extended interest in Taiwan by China, many people migrated from China into Taiwan, owing to the annexation of Taiwan to China. Taiwan, therefore, served as a key center for trade with Southeast Asia, China and even Japan. Thus, Taiwan was strate-

gically important, thereby becoming strong in agriculture.

Prior to the Japanese arrival, the colonial administrators of Taiwan haphazardly established a republic, attempting to defy the weakening Ching Dynasty on Mainland China. This republic lasted only for a period of five months because the Ching Dynasty lost the Sino-Japanese War and severed Taiwan to Japan in 1895 for war compensation. Thus, it is clear that the early history of Taiwan was unstable and multicultural, with little education due to the unstable governing.

Nonetheless, the Dutch sent their missionaries who came to Taiwan and began to develop a writing system to translate the Bible into some of the aboriginal languages. While the majority of the local languages, like Ho-Lo and Hakka, were not subject to the translation by the Dutch, the British and Canadian missionaries led these translation projects later during the Japanese occupation of Taiwan and also education and medicine in the earlier 20th century by establishing schools in the north, e.g., the Presbyterian high school and the first woman's college, Oxford College, in Tam-Tsui, and in the south, e.g., the Presbyterian high schools for boys and girls in Tai-Lam. However, Bible-translation was not extended to Hakka until much later, after World War II.

Be that as it may, for Taiwan, while the past history set the stage for contact between various languages, a word of caution must be mentioned. That is, it is the more recent history of Taiwan, in which the major players of language change came into contact, that accelerated the change involving all languages, be they aboriginal or not, owing to the successive socio-economical, educational, and political impacts of Japanese and Mandarin Chinese. The following will be a brief account of the Japanese colonization of Taiwan (1895-1945) and the occupation of the KMT (the political arm of Chiang Kai-Sek and his followers who fled to Taiwan after the war, when driven out of Mainland China).

Japanese Colonization

After the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, there was a treaty resulting in the relinquishment of Taiwan to Japanese rule. This was signed by the Chinese chief representative, Li Hung Chang, and the Japanese Prime Minister, Ito Hirofumi, in Shimonoseki, known in Chinese as the Ma Kuan Treaty which destined Taiwan to be a Japanese colony for 50 years until 1945 when Japan lost World War II.

The main goal of the Japanese government then was to assimilate the Taiwanese people. In order to achieve this goal, the new Japanese colonial government adopted a language policy through the institution of education in an attempt to wipe out the many mother tongues of the different peoples on the island, as were outlined earlier. The underlying motive was the very fact that throughout the world the mother tongue of an ethnic group is commonly recognized as the group's identity and, therefore, it must be dampened by means of an effective language policy through education. Thus, learning Japanese on the part of the colonials was important from the ruler's point of view, so that it would become

a common language among them because the newly acquired colony was multicultural and, therefore, they needed to learn Japanese to become better “citizens” of Japan. This language policy would subsequently become the basis for all Japanese colonies later, for instance, Korea (Wei, 2003; Gottlieb, 1995) and the Philippines with differing degrees of effectiveness.

The Japanese government set up schools in Taiwan as there was a desperate lack of comprehensive schooling for all citizens although this system was different from Mainland Japan. In the end, there were elementary schools for Japanese children (小学校) and separate schools for locals (公学校) which were for 6 years. A few elite Taiwanese were allowed to enter Japanese schools based on certain qualifications. Out of a class of 50 students possibly only 3 would be Taiwanese.

Gradually junior high/high schools (中学校) and a higher school (高等学校) were added. There was segregation of students entering these schools as well. There were two junior high schools in every city each lasting 5 years. One was for Japanese students to which a few select Taiwanese students could enter, e.g. Tainan First Junior High School (台南第一中学校), and the other for the local Taiwanese, e.g. Tainan Second Junior High School (台南第二中学校). The competition to enter the Japanese schools was very extreme.

There was only one higher school in the country, Taipei Higher School (台北高等学校), to which only few Taiwanese could enter. This higher school was a stepping stone to university education. Students would spend about 3 years studying there. As preparation for university, students chose from two areas of study: *Kou* (甲) and *Otsu* (乙). Thus, there were *Bunka Kou* (文科甲) and *Bunka Otsu* (文科乙), just as there were *Rika Kou* (理科甲) and *Rika Otsu* (理科乙).

Once passing the higher school, students could go to the only university in Taipei (The Imperial University in Taipei) which was for 4 years. In university, Taiwanese were encouraged to major in medicine, agriculture or literature, and not major in political science, law or history. Quite a few Taiwanese went to the Japanese Mainland in order to enter universities there. Nevertheless, through this education system, gradually more Taiwanese people were able to speak Japanese.

Manthroe (2005) interestingly states that the schooling probably was an ideal place in which families and clans could mingle as they would have been separated during the Ching period. By being brought together, national identity might have been started in student minds. It was also a place where some people found their voices. Taiwanese university students in Japan began to ask for equal rights in government which later led to Taiwanese being elected into city and town assemblies.

Besides the language policy tacitly enforced for assimilation, there was an overt but selective assimilation policy which was the changing of names demanded for elite families as a sign of loyalty. It was a movement called Kouminka (皇民化) that is, a movement to encourage the colonials to become loyal subjects of the Japanese Emperor. It was enforced in Korea as well.

This practice commenced prior to the Second Sino-Japanese War after the puppet coun-

try of Manchuria had been established by the Japanese military, as Japan was rapidly extending her colonial dominance into the Far East, including the Korean Peninsula. The head of Manchuria was the last Emperor of the Ching Dynasty, Pu-Yi, who was dethroned as the Ching Dynasty was overthrown. As a result, Manchuria was annexed as a part of Imperial Japan. This annexation later triggered the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937.

The movement of Kouminka was strategic as Japan was fighting a war with China. The Taiwanese were encouraged to change their way of life by speaking Japanese, wearing Japanese clothes, and take on the religion of Shintoism. The Koreans were no exception. Through such a movement, the Japanese government wanted to make their subjects Japanese. The Taiwanese young males were encouraged to fight in the Imperial Japanese army, not as regular soldiers, but as Gunzoku (軍属) 'military helpers'. Later many men were drafted.

Due to the Kouminka movement, some families in Taiwan adopted Japanese as the language in the home. However, Beaser (2006) does point out that while the Japanese government in Taiwan did prohibit other languages in the public domain, people continued to pass on their mother tongues to children. Strong dislike of the Japanese government and their tacit discrimination against the Taiwanese who wanted representation in an authoritarian government probably kept the ethnic identity alive with mother tongues. Thus, when listening to people from this generation, whose population is rapidly shrinking, they speak their native tongues very well, albeit often code-switching with Japanese or interspersing a few Japanese words in their conversations.

The Kuomintang

A major change came to the Taiwanese again in 1945 with the surrender of Japan. Before describing the changes made by the Chinese, it is significant to briefly consider the treaty after World War II and the disposal of conquered territories as this context set the political situation of Chiang Kai Shek when he invaded Taiwan with his National Government or Kuomintang (KMT) members.

Prior to the Potsdam Treaty, Franklin Roosevelt, Chiang Kai Shek and Winston Churchill agreed to take away all Japanese occupied territories from the beginning of World War I and territories taken from China, which are written in the Cairo Declaration of 1943. Stalin was not at this meeting but was informed of this event from America and Britain later and his agreement was obtained. It is interesting to note that this declaration was not a treaty but a document to show the intent of the leaders. The Potsdam Declaration in 1945 though mainly for Europe was a reaffirmation of this previous declaration. Then at the surrender of the Japanese in August 1945, the Potsdam Declaration was reaffirmed by Truman, Churchill and Stalin. It was decided that Chang Kai Shek was to oversee Taiwan as a representative in Taiwan on behalf of the allies (Manthrope, 2005).

The San Francisco Peace Treaty, signed by 48 nations to officially end World War II,

went into effect from 1952. However, no government representative was invited to attend the signing of that treaty from either the Nationalist Government (KMT) or Communist Government (CCP) of China because of civil war and ambiguity over the formal government existed. Also the Korean War had started, so the U.S. and Communist China were literally at war. The San Francisco Peace Treaty put into motion Japan's renunciation of sovereignty over Taiwan. However, there is ambiguity over the treaty with regards to the official government of Taiwan. The Treaty of Taipei signed by Japan and the KMT government came into effect on August 5, 1952 and was worded to agree with the San Francisco Treaty. However, according to some scholars, the language in the treaty does not explicitly state the transfer of sovereignty from Japan to the KMT's government. As Taiwan was to be overseen by Chiang Kai Shek as only a "representative" of the allies according to the Cairo Declaration and reiterated by the Potsdam Declaration, these circumstances hardly clarify the claims by the KMT to be rulers of Taiwan.

It is important to note that after the surrender of Japan, occupation of Japan by Allied Powers began August 28th, 1945. Thus, people in Taiwan anticipated a rescue by Allied Powers imminently. At the same time, Chiang Kai Shek thought that the Japanese would resist his forces coming in for occupation. However, neither was a problem. As a personal note from a witness of this procession, when the KMT troops marched into town, the Taiwanese could not fully comprehend what happened because the troops were so different from the well-disciplined Japanese soldiers in Taiwan. The troops sent in were poorly dressed as if coming from the countryside and not well-disciplined. It was this undisciplined characteristic which led to the February 28, 1947 incident (known simply as the 2/28 incident) when a cigarette-selling woman was killed by six Monopoly Commission agents that led to a string of rebellions by the Taiwanese, a massacre and persecutions. It was the expectations of the Taiwanese that there would be "occupation" by allied forces. However, certainly they did not anticipate conquerors from China at the time (Manthorpe, 2005).

Political Suppression

Eventually in 1949, Chiang Kai Shek fled to Taiwan with about 2 million soldiers, families and businessmen and at that time, the population of Taiwan was 6 million. It is at this time that colonization of Taiwan started, this time by the Chinese. The colonization had several features. Since the anger following the 2/28 incident had built up against the occupying Chinese, Chiang Kai Shek implemented four pillars.

(1) language policy

Education, public speaking, and most of the media were all to be in Mandarin. All schools were to be monolingual Mandarin. Newspapers and the media were almost exclusively in Mandarin, except for 2 newspapers in English. In the electronic media Taiwanese

was said to be tolerated on the condition that they would be changed to Mandarin (Tsao, 2008). Thus, the stage was set for all public communication to be strictly in Mandarin. While this policy was the same as the Japanese, as will be seen below, the oppression through which this was implemented was quite different.

(2) land policy

The majority of lands were owned by the Taiwanese. The KMT forced deals with land owners to give stocks in exchange of the land. The stocks were for government industries that were taken over from the Japanese: cement, aluminum, sugar cane, and fertilizer. In the past, tenants and land owners had deals where certain percentages of crops would be given to tenants and the rest given to the owners. In some cases rents were worth 50% or even as high as 80% and were made to be reduced to 37.5% (Manthorpe, 2005). The new policy by the KMT stated that lands could be kept if cultivated by the owner. If lands could not be cultivated, they had to switch to stocks. Thus, former tenants could eventually keep the land that they cultivated and land owners lost land. However, some land owners were able to make money with stocks and other businesses. As a result, there were vast differences in financial distribution. Many people of the KMT became very wealthy.

(3) educational oppression

When Chiang Kai Shek came to Taiwan, there were about 6 million Taiwanese on the island and he brought in 2 million people with him. His goal was to return to China to take it back. Thus, education of the people was important to take back China. All slogans in education were anti-communist and tried to create loyalism: *be loyal to your leader, don't speak Taiwanese, strive in business and not politics*. The KMT learned from Japan about how to rule the Taiwanese. The people must learn Mandarin because the mother tongue which is their identity must be erased. The Taiwanese should not be put into high positions. Both of these had been practiced by the Japanese during their occupation as well. The only difference was that the Japanese education system had children separated as Japanese and Taiwanese. The KMT did not do this. All schools equally educated all citizens together, except in the practice of administrative hierarchy where discrimination was evident.

It is important to note that the first generation that went through this system were MSL candidate learners (Mandarin as a Second Language), yet education was all in Mandarin. In other words, total immersion was practiced with no prior background or preparation for children who were then punished for using their native tongues. Students were forced to wear a placard for speaking in their native tongues according to a personal source. She felt humiliated by this action. Sandel (2003) also presents reflections of three generations of people who went through the education system during the KMT rule. He found that students were fined, and/or made to wear a sign stating that the person spoke a local language, and were physically punished. The psychological humiliation inflicted on

the people for speaking mother tongue was lasting for 16 of the 17 people Sandal interviewed. The Mandarin only language policy and punishment did not change until 1987 when it was changed by the rising of President Lee Teng-hui in the KMT, a native Taiwanese. By that time, the majority of the population had already become bilingual, many even lost their mother tongue becoming monolingual in Mandarin Chinese.

(4) military ownership

Because the ultimate goal of Chiang Kai Shek was to return to China, military build up and allegiance were mandatory. All males had obligatory military conscription. The KMT owned the military. All positions in the military above captain had to become KMT members. Thus, the Taiwanese could only have lower positions. In fact, all government positions were held by either the KMT mainlanders or Taiwanese who joined. Thus, again disparity resulted with those from KMT holding high positions. This disparity slightly changed as the KMT realized later that it could no longer take back China after 1950 and KMT membership was used to entice the local people to join the party for political gains.

Through colonization by the KMT there was political oppression and favoritism of KMT members, but with some stabilization there was a financial boom as industries increased. Also as the KMT wished to take back China, the government announced slogans to encourage people to have more babies. Through these efforts the population increased from 8 million to 23 million. This baby boom as in many other countries around the world has become a worry for the government.

Intermarriage

Before 1949, there was a definitive segregation between elite KMT and the locals. Thus, intermarriage was forbidden. However, after 1950 with mass production and the realization that China would never be conquered, intermarriage began. Later still from the reign of Chiang Ching Kuo, from 1978, local Taiwanese were allowed into positions of power in the KMT. It is at this point that language can be seen as capital. With local Taiwanese being allowed into the KMT, knowing Mandarin was an advantage as all government and public activity must be done in Mandarin. Thus, this became an incentive for people to learn Mandarin. At the same time, the local Taiwanese were enticed by promotion into a higher position and to receive more money by being a KMT member. Thus, intermarriage became increasingly popular as locals moved into the KMT circle.

Thus, as the KMT settled into being permanent rulers of Taiwan, the population increased, opportunities for local Taiwanese opened with intermarriage, political recruitment into the KMT increased and businesses boomed. With years passing, serious changes occurred in Taiwan politically and language choices made in the past began to hinder and create controversies. This brings us to the current situation of Taiwan.

The Current Situation of Taiwan and Changes

When the KMT allowed Taiwanese to enter into powerful positions, it was probably not their intention to allow for major changes in the political or language policies of the country. However, with the rise of Lee Teng-hui into power, a new chapter opened up for Taiwan but also for new challenges.

Political conflicts

Lee Teng-hui was the first KMT president who was a native Taiwanese. His advancement to power was a monumental step for Taiwan. First, he lifted martial law in 1987 which offered freedom and new options to people by laying the ground work for full democratic elections by the people of Taiwan. Second, he showed the acceptability of native tongues. He was the first KMT president to use a language other than Mandarin in his speeches. While he did not stop the use of Mandarin in schools, he did prohibit the punishment for using native tongues. Mainly due to his political declarations, his pointing to Taiwanese independence took on the ire of China.

Then in 2001, with the election of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate Chen Shui-bian as president, the government turned from KMT dominance to a Taiwanese dominance and began to espouse Taiwanese independence. However, it is the movement towards independence that has brought to the foreground the native tongues. Taking real steps towards independence forced people to think about the future language of the country. Whether people agreed with this movement or not, the movement forced people to strongly consider their languages. Thus, in 2003 the Ministry of Education drafted a policy stating that all languages are equally important cultural assets thereby assigning equal status to all as national languages (Yeh et. al. 2004).

These brazen actions toward independence caused more aggressive responses from China. Consequently, many people were worried in Taiwan and as a consequence through elections, the government reverted to KMT in 2008. It is possible that another government change could occur in the 2012 Presidential Election. Internationally Taiwan is swayed by a lack of recognition for its democratic government and the world's fear of China. Domestically its own government has moved from one extreme to the other in its stance on independence. However, this unstable balance might be necessary for a country that has only recently been able to contemplate its own future.

In the meantime, this political conflict has politicized the language choice of people individually, in the family, in the public and in the government. During the campaigning for the 2001 presidency, candidates used Ho-Lo and Hakka, particularly by the DPP candidates. While this maneuver did not necessarily make the candidates for DPP win, it did

help endear them to the public. Chen especially had a talent in code-switching between Ho-Lo and Mandarin (Wei 2008). Through the politicization of native tongues, Taiwan has begun to accept languages other than Mandarin in daily life and even in business and government. The television broadcast of politicians has certainly shed light on the multilingual island. However, it is hoped that through this turmoil, the identity of Taiwan might be materialized and that its multicultural background will be in the forefront of that decision.

Discrimination

An additional negative consequence of colonization is discrimination which was experienced in Taiwan at many levels for many years. If we keep our focus on the past 100 years, there was discrimination during the Japanese occupation and during the reign of the KMT. While under Japanese governance, the Taiwanese were meant to assimilate, but they were never really assimilated. The Taiwanese were educated in schools so that they could be "unquestioningly loyal to Japan" (Tsurumi 1977: 11). However, with the segregation between Japanese and Taiwanese, the Taiwanese did feel as second class citizens. In addition, the issue of Japanese in schools was also a problem. Students were required to learn Japanese in a total immersion situation. It was through this segregation, though, that Taiwanese people probably garnered a stronger national identity. In fact, many people during this period still retained their native tongues although there were some who chose to use Japanese in the homes particularly during the period of Kouminka.

Similar discrimination to the Taiwanese occurred under KMT rule. While schools did not segregate students based on ethnicity, they did place students at a strong disadvantage by making Mandarin speaking as compulsory when students did not know Mandarin. Students for many years were placed into schools with every subject in Mandarin with no second language preparation. As stated above, students were also then punished for speaking native tongues. In addition, within the positions of society, those with KMT membership were given privileges of position and prestige. Furthermore, the wealth mainly flowed in the direction of the KMT. Because of this unbalance, those with KMT connections and the Mandarin language were able to succeed faster while others struggled to learn Mandarin and tried to establish themselves. It is for this reason of discrimination, that parents opted to use Mandarin at home in order to give children more advantage in society.

Through all of these situations of disadvantage, the Taiwanese people have been able to pull through. The economy has boomed and the people have certainly made something of themselves through these struggles. It is hoped that these struggles will lead to greater tolerance of variety.

Family Communication

As discussed previously, intermarriage was prevalent after the KMT moved to Taiwan. Intermarriage of people from two language groups cause problems in terms of language choice. If a husband and wife speak the same language, there is no problem in deciding what language to use in the home. However, if the husband is a Hakka speaker and the mother is a Mandarin speaker, there is a problem. The decision of what to speak at home is reinforced by education.

Immigrants to the U.S. or other countries have faced the same decision for language use. There are many scenarios for the choice of language in the home. Often if the married Taiwanese couple immigrate to the U.S., both of whom speak the same language with children of school age, especially just finishing elementary school or in junior high school, the parents will continue to use their native tongue in the home and so will the children. However, often if the children are still young when immigrating, they pick up English quickly and will often speak English at home even though the parents speak their native tongue. Furthermore, if a Hakka-speaking Taiwanese person immigrates to the U.S. and marries a Hakka speaker in the U.S., most likely they will speak Hakka, but when children are born they will most likely speak English and only parents speak the native tongue. Since peer association is very strong in children, when entering school it is highly likely that children end up speaking English at home without strong parental implementation.

This same dilemma occurred in Taiwan with the multilingual history and mandatory Mandarin education. In Taiwan, with intermarriage, children have three choices of language: (1) Mandarin from school; (2) father's language; or (3) mother's language. Since the KMT took control, the choice of Mandarin in the family has increased in the second and third generations. This choice is mainly to think of the child's future occupation and to deter the humiliation that children could undergo in school. However, the "lack of choice" that people feel has robbed them of their ethnic identity. The reality of language choice that has been imposed on people by the KMT is to be Chinese albeit a questionable Chinese as the KMT sees itself as the true rulers of China. This language reality is now being changed.

Low Birthrate

In connection to family communication, the structure of the family has been changing in Taiwan as it has in many countries over the years. At the height of KMT rule, there was a baby boom to build an army for invasion of China. However, nuclear families have become common, the number of divorces have increased, the economy has become comfortable, so the number of children have now decreased. Thus, demographically, the elderly

are the largest group in Taiwan and children are decreasing. People need to take heed that the native speakers of the Taiwanese languages are primarily elderly, thus, measures must be taken to pass on native tongues.

While school hours are budgeted for native language learning, it would be additionally beneficial to take advantage of extended family to use native tongues. One alternative is to see the young children mingling with the elderly at day care centers, in elementary schools and in communities besides just the family so that the native languages might thrive again. Perhaps an NGO or NPO can be formed or simply community services through churches. Since the elderly do not necessarily work, having the elderly speaking to the young would be beneficial to both sides. This is the structure of the extended family which current society has completely moved away from and now needs to move back to in order to pass on the native languages.

Aboriginal languages are in more dire circumstances as populations are much smaller. Preservation of aboriginal languages have caught the attention of foreign scholars, so together with scholars domestically, work is being done to pass down the language and a corpus has been set up online by the Institute of Linguistics of Academia Sinica in Taiwan for many to examine.

While there are still people to pass on the language, it will be good to see the living languages continue. Once no native speakers are around, the language simply is a relic.

Language Identity

As mentioned above, the lifting of martial law in 1987 was a major turning point in language identity for Taiwan. Up until this point, language choice to many Taiwanese did not exist. That is, when considering the option for the future, many Taiwanese probably saw language choice as a determiner for success or failure. Since Mandarin is a necessary tool for business in the future in Taiwan, they chose to immerse themselves in that language but at the cost of eliminating their native tongues. At the same time though, there are others with stronger national identity who chose to have two identities by showing Mandarin in the public, but using their native tongue in the home. As the generations have passed, those with stronger national identity have been fewer. The monolingual identity forced onto people by the government has taken fruition and in one sense robbed people of national identity. The Taiwanese people are actually multilingual and each language has a unique identity. With more freedom in Taiwan, this multilingual identity has slowly emerged.

However, there is a long road ahead in terms of the languages of Taiwan. Education in mother tongue did not officially start until 2003. In 1996, primary schools offered a 40-minute course of native cultural instruction once a week but lacked in language instruction. From 2001, elementary students were required to study their mother tongues for one period, for six years. Then in 2003, the Ministry of Education drafted a policy stating that all

languages are equally important cultural assets, thus assigning equal status to all as national languages (Yeh et. al. 2004). One of the problems that has hindered education of native tongues is the lack of written script. Since the native tongues have been primarily passed on through oral tradition, having consensus on the correct romanization or characterization in Chinese has been difficult.

Now linguists and educators are interested in the state of actual language use. As of 2004, Yeh, Chan, and Cheng did a survey in seven universities of Ho-Lo mother tongue speakers. 46% of them indicated that they use Ho-Lo at home, 51% said they use it in the regions where they live, 39% said they use it in the general public place when travelling in Taiwan. For Mandarin use, the percentages were 54% at home, 76% in neighboring regions, and 77% in general public places (Gijssen and Liu, 2007). For the other languages in Taiwan, the use of mother tongue is probably more critical. As of 1995 in a survey by Lin (1995) in 25 junior high schools, 37% said that their aboriginal language was one of the most frequently used language at home. Only 68% said they could speak their parents' language, 16% said they were fluent. According to a survey by Huang (1993) of some students and adults in Taipei, 40% said that Hakka was the most frequently used language at home. Only 70% said they could speak Hakka.

Mandarin continues to be the main language of business and government. Thus, it remains to be seen to what extent people in Taiwan will be willing to use native tongues and with what tongue they will identify. In addition, when considering business especially with one of the largest economies, China, Mandarin would be the logical choice for business. However, there is an additional factor to muddle language education which is English. As with all other countries in Asia, children are learning English to be put to use in the future global economy. As of 2003, children from third grade began to learn English. However, both the simple choices of Mandarin and English may be important as tools, but these tools do not necessarily last for a long time.

Taiwan has a long road ahead if native tongues are to be re-established. If so, there are precedents in many countries which have multicultural backgrounds and more than one national language. Countries such as Singapore have English, Malay, Tamil and Mandarin as national languages. In schools they are taught in English and learn one of the other national languages. Switzerland has French, Italian, and German as official languages but also has Romansh as one of the national languages. It is possible for Taiwan to have more than one national language, but the people of Taiwan will have to decide eventually in what direction they wish to go.

Conclusion

As can be seen with this overview of Taiwan from the past to the present, the various contacts of language groups kept Taiwan as a key center between Southeast Asia, China and Japan. It has been the rope per se in a tug-of-war. Through colonization by Japan,

education became wide spread in Taiwan and people possibly became more unified. Then with the rule of the KMT government from China, a new language was imposed on the people again, but this time with a more detrimental affect on the native tongues. As stated above, Mandarin has been the identity imposed upon the people of Taiwan, but there are actually many languages each with unique characteristics and heritage that were interwoven. With more political freedom, people are finding their mother tongues again. However, in the road ahead, establishing the mother tongue identity will be difficult as children have been indoctrinated with Mandarin, the global economy might be more conducive to Mandarin, and not all people agree on political directions of Taiwan.

As a linguist, I am more concerned with the family environment where mother tongue can be cultivated but for the above stated reasons, it has been neglected. In the meantime, the native speakers of Taiwanese languages are primarily elderly and this generation will not be around much longer. Thus, besides short periods of education during school hours, families through time with the grandparents or within the community must make a concerted effort to use more mother tongues. Through additional hours of speaking and listening, mother tongues will become more familiar again. In fact, to have education of mother tongues is odd if it is not used as a living language. These languages are treasures of cultures and are just as important as buildings or art. It does not matter if the language has writing or not. While it is important to have written records of dying languages, languages simply in writing are history. It is important to have a writing system eventually for using the language in government for the future, but it is not the most important at this very moment. The point is to keep the languages alive through speaking if at all possible and Taiwan still has that opportunity but must work quickly.

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